

# GAS EXPLOSION AT GRAND CENTRAL KILLS 14, HURTS 100, SPREADS RUIN

WEATHER--Unsettled to-night and Tuesday; colder.

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PRICE ONE CENT. Copyright, 1910, by The Press Publishing Co. (The New York World). NEW YORK, MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1910. 22 PAGES PRICE ONE CENT.

Sketch of Disaster by Louis Biedermann  
Made Especially for The Evening World  
Drawn by the Famous Sunday World Artist from Descriptions Furnished by Eye-Witnesses.



## ELECTRIC SPARK FIRED GAS FROM LEAK, SAYS CROKER

Fire Chief Believes Train Ramming Buffer Broke Pipe and Workman's Tool Short-Circuited Third Rail Current Under Power-House.

Chief Croker, after a careful examination of the wreckage of the explosion this afternoon, said he did not believe dynamite had anything to do with it. Dynamite was stored in the vicinity, he said, but remote from the scene of the explosion.

So far as Chief Croker had been able to learn, there was but one explosion. He depended upon observers who were nearby and seem to be level-headed. Many can be found who say there were two and even three explosions. Some say the first explosion was loud, the other like an echo. Others declare that the first explosion was mild compared with the second.

**Believes Gas Was to Blame.**

"After sifting all the stories I could hear and looking over the wreck," said the Chief, "I think the damage was done in one big explosion of Pintsch gas. The gas in itself is not destructive but when mixed with air in the

## EXPLOSION HURLS 55 MEN FROM 60-FOOT SCAFFOLD

Whole Gang of Bricklayers at Work on Building Adjoining Wrecked Structure Flung Over Wall.

A gang of fifty-five bricklayers working on a long scaffold, sixty feet in the air and almost directly above the scene of the Grand Central explosion, had an escape from death that bordered on the miraculous. A cushion of air, forced upward by the explosion, hoisted the big scaffold, tilted it inwardly and tossed the fifty-five men over the wall they were building and upon another scaffold on the inside. Only one was injured, Andrew Anderson, and he got off with a scalp wound.

The bricklayers are in the employ of John Pierce, the contractor, who is putting up the new powerhouse in Fifth street, west of the building in which the explosion occurred. The scaffolding was at the fourth floor level of the easterly wall of the new building and sixty feet above the level of the railroad yard.

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The scaffold rose under their feet and tilted inwardly like the upper berth of a Pullman car closing up. The force of the air was equally distributed along the length of the scaffold and the fifty-five men, all with towels in their hands and some holding bricks, dived over the wall head first like a troupe of trained acrobats and landed head first on piles of brick and mortar on the inside.

It was a matter of the way the scaffold tilted that settled the fate of the fifty-five. Had the air pressure, upwardly directed, been the stronger alongside the wall, the scaffold would have been tilted outward and the men would have fallen through their protective wall of canvas and rope and down sixty feet into the fire and wreckage below.

**CUDAHY LEFT \$11,000,000 TO FAMILY AND CHARITIES.**

CHICAGO, Dec. 19.—Michael Cudahy, founder of the Cudahy firm of meat packers, left an estate worth \$11,000,000, according to the will which was filed today. Of the \$10,000,000 is in personal property and the remainder is real estate.

Under the terms of the will the widow, Catherine Cudahy, will receive an annuity of \$20,000 to be paid from the estate to the trustees, who are his daughter, Miss Mary T. Cudahy, his son, Joseph M. Cudahy and Albert P. Cudahy. The trustees are given special powers and are to divide the income of the estate among the children of the testator as they shall see fit.

**Girl Shoots Herself.**

COLUMBIUS, Miss., Dec. 13.—Miss Willie Askew, aged sixteen, committed suicide here today, using a revolver. No cause is known for the act. Her father was the late Joseph Askew, State Railroad Commissioner, and her grandfather the late Gen. J. H. Sharp.

**Spilled Over the Wall.**

Even before the sound reached the fifty-five men they felt an upward rush

## DEATH AND GREAT HAVOC IN TERRIFIC EXPLOSION IN N. Y. CENTRAL YARDS

Trolley Car Hurled Over, Pinning Passengers Beneath and Killing Four---Several Victims Probably Blown to Pieces---Streets Filled With Injured ---Roofs Torn From Great Buildings, Homes Wrecked, Big Hotels Shaken---N. Y. Central Employee Arrested.

Gas that had been escaping for half an hour from the Pintsch gas lighting tanks beneath what is known as the "battery wing" of the New York Central's auxiliary power house at the southwest corner of Lexington avenue and Fiftieth street exploded at 8.15 o'clock this morning with terrific force, spreading disaster over a wide area, killing fourteen and injuring more than one hundred.

The power house, which extends over the gas supply station, where trains are backed in to have their tanks filled, was demolished by the explosion. Lexington avenue and nearby cross streets were strewn with dead and injured. Scores of buildings were wrecked and the path of destruction extended a mile south and a mile north on Lexington avenue.

The force of the explosion followed a stratum of rock that underlies Lexington and Madison avenues. A trolley car passing the power house when the gas exploded was blown off the track and overturned. Four of the passengers were killed outright and as many more dangerously hurt.

**CENTRAL MOTORMAN ARRESTED.**

The Fire Department, the Police Department, the District-Attorney and the Coroners held separate investigations this afternoon. At the conclusion of the investigation before the Board of Coroners and Deputy Police Commissioner Driscoll in the Fifty-first street station this afternoon Motorman Albert Seagroatt, a New York Central employee, was arrested.

Seagroatt backed a train into the cut under the wing of the power-house and overran a buffer. In the smash that followed a pipe connected with the Pintsch gas tanks was disconnected, allowing the gas to escape. Half an hour later, when the gas had mingled with sufficient air to give it the explosive intensity of lyddite a workman dropped a tool on the third rail. There was an electric flash and then the explosion.

The motorman told the Board of Coroners that he lost his air while backing his train under the power-house. He had no sandbox and could not stop. He saw that the gas pipe had been disconnected and reported the accident. Then he got his train out and was in another part of the cut when the upheaval occurred. The investigators could not learn just what work was done to repair the severed pipe.

Cornelius Vanderbilt, one of the Vice-Presidents of the New York Central, was early on the scene of the disaster and promised the city officials that he would give them every opportunity to make an exhaustive investigation.

**MANY VICTIMS DEAF OR BLIND.**

That many of the injured who were taken to hospitals will die was declared this afternoon by Dr. Marvin Palmer, chief surgeon of the Police Department. He added that many of the injured would be totally blind because of glass blown into their eyes.

The tremendous force of the explosion unroofed nearby buildings and their walls were riddled by flying missiles. None on the street or in buildings within half a dozen blocks of the power-house escaped injury. Many of the injured became totally deaf and their deafness may be permanent.

At 1 o'clock District-Attorney Whitman asked the railroad people to put at least two hundred more men at work to dig for bodies in the ruins. The orders for such a force were at once given. The fire hose lines were lifted over the street car tracks on Lexington avenue on high tripods and street car traffic was resumed at about half-past 1 o'clock. Conductors were instructed not to stop or to permit passengers to board or leave the cars between Forty-fifth and Fifty-third streets.

**EXPLANATION BY CENTRAL OFFICIALS.**

The New York Central officials this afternoon gave out the following statement.

A careful investigation made by Chief Engineer Kittbridge, Construction Engineer Harwood, Electrical Engineer Kappes and Manager Whaley of the Grand Central Terminal, indicates that the explosion was the result of an electrical train backing over a bumping post in the storage

yard, breaking a gas pipe, the escape from which penetrated the lower part of the substation power house and there becoming ignited from some cause unknown.

Policeman Joseph Toumey of the East Fifty-first street station was escorting two little girls across Lexington avenue when he was suddenly blown twenty feet in the air. The little girls were blown in the opposite direction. The little girls were badly injured.

Battalion Chief William J. Duffy of Hook and Ladder No. 2 was taking a bath when the upheaval came. A slab of marble was blown on him, but he scrambled out, cut and bleeding. Disregarding his wounds he jumped into his clothes and rushed out to the work of rescue. Bricks and splintered glass fell about him while he dressed.

When District-Attorney Whitman arrived he was informed by railroad officials that there was no dynamite in the building. The police had been told beforehand that there was 100 pounds of dynamite in a closet near the gas tanks. A railroad conductor told an Evening World reporter that he had seen the dynamite delivered early this morning.

In scores of hospitals, hotels, homes and schools whose foundations rest on that rib of rock under Madison and Lexington avenue ceilings came down and windows blew in. Several emergency hospitals were equipped in all possible haste to aid in caring for the injured. The ambulances and patrol wagons could not begin to carry away the victims of the explosion fast enough for their safety. At least a dozen of the injured in hospitals are believed to be mortally hurt. Hundreds suffered minor damage.

**BABIES HURLED FROM CRIBS.**

In the Babies' Hospital at Fifth-fifth street and Lexington avenue the nurses were alring the dormitories when the explosion occurred. Many babies were blown out of their cribs, nurses were thrown down with babies in their arms, and in two cases babies were blown out of bathtubs as if some powerful suction had drawn them out.

Chief Croker said after inspecting the ruin of the building in which the explosion occurred that it would be at least a day before he could get to the bottom of the debris, where several mangled victims are believed to be. There is a great mass of tangled steel to obstruct the work of digging. It is not thought that any in the ruin can possibly survive.

Within fifteen minutes after the explosion ambulances and fire apparatus were rushed to the scene from every hospital and fire house within the radius of a mile. No one could tell how many had been killed in the power house or in the railroad cut. The building was practically blown to pieces. It was a three-story structure of steel and brick construction.

The fires in the furnaces were blown out through the walls and up through the roof. Great blocks of stone were projected against opposite houses, tearing through the walls.

**FIRE HOUSE WRECKED.**

Opposite the power house is the house of Hook and Ladder No. 2 and the headquarters of Battalion Chief William J. Duffy. Every window was blown out of this structure and the roof torn off. The trolley car, which was blown over was passing the hook and ladder quarters going north. It was car No. 1711 of the Lexington avenue line, in charge of Motorman Orrie Schuller of No. 115 West Sixty-second street and Conductor Henry Frank of No. 581 Prospect avenue, Bronx.

The car was lifted from the rails and spun in the air, crashing down on its side and striking as it fell a touring car of the Edison Electric Light Company driven by Frank Smith.

There were seven passengers in the car and four were instantly killed. The car went to pieces like a cigar box and the dead were mangled with broken timbers and twisted rods of steel.

The Edison Company automobile, a seven-passenger touring car, was running alongside the trolley car, in the same direction. Frank Smith, the chauffeur, described his experience after he had been taken to the New York Hospital, suffering from a broken nose, five broken fingers and lacerations of the arms and legs.

"Almost before I realized that there had been an explosion," he said, "a rain of bricks and mortar began to descend on me and then a six-foot timber shot down out of the sky like a perpendicular arrow. I had one foot on the brake and the other foot on the accelerator. My legs were spread wide apart. The piece of timber passed directly between my knees and smashed through the floor of the car. Then the trolley car toppled over on me and pinned me beneath a mass of wreckage.

**CHAUFFEUR'S MIRACULOUS ESCAPE.**

"That timber saved my life, for it prevented one of the trucks of the car from reaching my body. I was pinned in the mass of timber and steel for about five minutes. Two priests pulled me out for dead and began ad-

(Continued on Second Page.)